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ABSTRACT

Written for classroom teachers, the manual describes a model for analyzing interaction between teachers and mainstreamed special education students. The introduction stresses that the model's observation approach emphasizes professional growth rather than institutional regulation. Seven steps of the model are discussed: determining teacher goals, selecting area and setting criteria for observation, conducting the classroom observation, preparing for the feedback session, giving responsive feedback to the teacher, determining a plan for development, and implementing the plan. Important aspects of feedback are considered, and resources for identifying different teaching strategies in the development of a plan are described. A sample observation analysis is appended. (CL)

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one.

RESPONSIVE SUPERVISION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

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OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

THIS MANUAL IS WRITTEN FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS WHO USE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TO ACHIEVE MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING. THE MANUAL WAS ADAPTED FOR USE IN SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS INTEGRATING SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN.* THE APPROACH PRESENTED HERE INVOLVES AN INTERACTIVE PROCESS THAT LEADS TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING AND ACCEPTANCE OF INDIVIDUAL TEACHING STYLES. IT INCLUDES METHODS TO IDENTIFY AND PUT INTO PRACTICE TECHNIQUES THAT PROVIDE EFFECTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR CHILDREN; IT ALSO DESCRIBES AND EVALUATES THEIR EFFECTIVENESS.

THE EMPHASIS HERE IS ON PROFESSIONAL GROWTH RATHER THAN ON INSTITUTIONAL REGULATION: A PROCESS THAT SUPPORTS GROWTH IS VERY DIFFERENT FROM THE FORMALIZED RATINGS AND OBSERVATIONS USED TO MAKE ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS ABOUT TEACHERS.

OBSERVING FOR GROWTH INVOLVES A COOPERATIVE AND RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHER AND OBSERVER. IT IS A METHOD OF SHARING INFORMATION BUILT ON A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP.

AS TEACHERS GAIN EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM, THEY BECOME MORE SENSITIVE TO THE VARIETIES OF INTERACTIONS THAT CAN OCCUR, AND THEY BECOME AWARE OF MORE POSSIBILITIES IN TERMS OF THEIR

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*THE TERM "SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD" IS USED AS A MORE APPROPRIATE SUBSTITUTE FOR SUCH TERMS AS "HANDICAPPED," "DISABLED," "IDENTIFIED SPECIAL EDUCATION CHILD," OR "LEARNING DISABLED," "EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED," "PHYSICALLY IMPAIRED." THE TERM SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD REFLECTS A POSITION THAT SOME CHILDREN HAVE SPECIFIC INDIVIDUAL NEEDS THAT MUST BE SERVED IF THAT CHILD IS TO RECEIVE ALL THE BENEFITS OF A PUBLIC EDUCATION. IT ALSO IMPLIES THAT, AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER, ALL CHILDREN HAVE SPECIAL NEEDS.

OWN RESPONSE. A WELL-PLANNED PROGRAM OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT USING CLASSROOM OBSEVATION CAN HELP THEM TO SORT OUT THEIR QUESTIONS AND FEELINGS; TO ORGANIZE THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION AROUND THESE CONCERNS; AND TO ASSIST THEM IN RESPONDING TO THE NEEDS AND DEMANDS OF ALL CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM.

OBSERVING FOR DEVELOPMENT INVOLVES HELPING THE TEACHER SEE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WHAT IS INTENDED BY THE TEACHER AND WHAT, IN FACT, THE TEACHER COMMUNICATES. THE OBSERVER HELPS BY PROVIDING FEEDBACK, BY GIVING THE TEACHER INFORMATION ON WHAT IN FACT DID OCCUR. FEEDBACK CAN HELP IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING BY CLARIFYING THE LEARNING CONCEPTS USED BY THE TEACHER; BY ASSISTING THE TEACHER TO ACKNOWLEDGE THOSE THINGS S/HE DOES WELL AND EFFECTIVELY, BY STIMULATING THE TEACHER TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR SELF-IMPROVEMENT, AND BY HELPING TO CLARIFY THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN TEACHER BEHAVIORS AND STUDENT BEHAVIORS. FEEDBACK GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT ARE ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE NEW CHALLENGES TEACHERS FACE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN.

WHEN INFORMATION IS USED TO SUPPORT A TEACHER'S GROWTH AND WHEN THE PROCEDURES FOR GATHERING AND USING THAT INFORMATION INCLUDE A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER, THE OBSERVATION-FEEDBACK PROCESS IS RESPONSIVE. THE REMAINDER OF THIS MANUAL TELLS HOW TO PROVIDE OBSERVATION FEEDBACK AS PART OF A RESPONSIVE DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR A TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL GROWTH.

THIS IS THE FIRST IN A SERIES OF MANUALS DESCRIBING HOW TO USE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION AND INDIVIDUALIZED PLANNING FOR RESPONSIVE SUPERVISION FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THE SERIES INCLUDES:

I OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS
II TRAINING MANUAL FOR THE RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
III RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
IV THE INDIVIDUALIZED PROFESSIONAL PLAN FOR ADULTS

OBSERVING IN THE CLASSROOM

THERE IS NO CONVINCING EVIDENCE THAT CHILDREN SCORE HIGHER ON ACHIEVEMENT TESTS IN ONE TYPE OF CLASSROOM THAN IN ANOTHER (HEATH, R., ET AL., 1975). WE DO KNOW, HOWEVER, THAT DIFFERENT TYPES OF CLASSROOMS AFFORD CHILDREN DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN, TO EXPERIENCE DIFFERENT THINGS, AND TO DEVELOP IN DIFFERENT WAYS (STALLINGS, 1975). ALL OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SETTING FROM THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE FURNITURE TO THE UNSPOKEN RULES OF BEHAVIOR AFFECT WHAT HAPPENS TO CHILDREN IN THAT SETTING. TEACHING INVOLVES AN ONGOING EFFORT TO TRANSLATE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY INTO CONCRETE EXPERIENCES FOR LEARNERS.

ACHIEVING A MATCH BETWEEN A TEACHER'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND CLASSROOM ACTION IS A DIFFICULT UNDERTAKING. IT INVOLVES ORGANIZING THE CLASSROOM IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP IN THE DESIRED DIRECTION IS AVAILABLE TO ALL CHILDREN. TEACHERS MUST DECIDE WHETHER AND HOW GROUPS OF CHILDREN WILL BE COMPOSED AND HOW TEACHER/STUDENT ROLES WILL BE DEFINED. TEACHERS MUST THEN SELECT LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND DECIDE HOW THESE EXPERIENCES ARE BEST PRESENTED. THEY MUST DECIDE HOW THE FURNITURE AND SPATIAL AREAS WILL BE ARRANGED AND USED. THE SPECIFIC ARRANGEMENT OF PEOPLE, IDEAS, AND THINGS DEFINE TO SOME EXTENT WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN THE CLASSROOM BY FOSTERING SOME EXPERIENCES AND DISCOURAGING OTHERS.

EACH CLASSROOM REPRESENTS A DISTINCT CONFIGURATION OF ALL OF THESE FACTORS. IN ADDITION, CLASSROOMS CAN BE ACTIVE, SPONTANEOUS ENVIRONMENTS WITH AN ELEMENT OF UNPREDICTABILITY ABOUT THEM.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE TEACHER IS TO ACHIEVE A FORM OF EXPERIENCE FOR CHILDREN THAT BEST REPRESENTS AND REFLECTS THE TEACHER'S SKILLS AND TO DEVELOP THESE SKILLS TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF ALL CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM.

THE INTEGRATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN PLACES ANOTHER DIMENSION ON TEACHER DEVELOPMENT. TEACHERS MUST BECOME KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SENSITIVE TO THE WIDE VARIETY OF CHILDREN'S DIFFERENCES AND NEEDS. FOR EXAMPLE, A YOUNG CHILD WITH LIMITED MOBILITY DEMANDS THE TEACHER EXAMINE THE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CLASSROOM. MATERIALS MUST BE ACCESSIBLE; PHYSICAL OBJECTS MUST BE CONSIDERED FROM THE STANDPOINT OF THE CHILD'S SAFETY. THIS SAME CHILD MAY ALSO REQUIRE THE TEACHER TO ATTEND TO A NEW SET OF SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS.

THE SPECIAL NEEDS OF YOUNG CHILDREN WITH A DISABILITY HAVE DEVELOPED FROM VARIOUS SITUATIONS:

- OVER-PROTECTIVE PARENTS. PARENTS OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN MAY BE MORE INTRUSIVE AND AUTHORITARIAN IN THEIR CHILD-REARING PRACTICES.

- LESS CHANCE TO EXPLORE. CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS HAVE LESS CHANCE TO EXPLORE THEIR ENVIRONMENT AND TRY NEW ACTIVITIES AND NEW EXPERIENCES.

- LESS RESPONSIBILITY. SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN ARE GIVEN LESS RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSEQUENTLY HAVE LITTLE OR NO CHANCE TO FAIL. THE TENDENCY IS TO PROTECT THE CHILD FROM DISAPPOINTMENT.

- FEWER SOCIAL EXPERIENCES. THE NEED FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SOCIALIZE AND THE ENJOYMENT OF THAT PROCESS IS OFTEN OVERLOOKED AND UNDERVALUED FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD.

- UNHEALTHY SELF-CONCEPT. SOCIETY DEVALUES PEOPLE WITH SOCIAL DIFFERENCES. THIS ATTITUDE RESULTS IN THE LACK OF POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE IN CHILDREN.

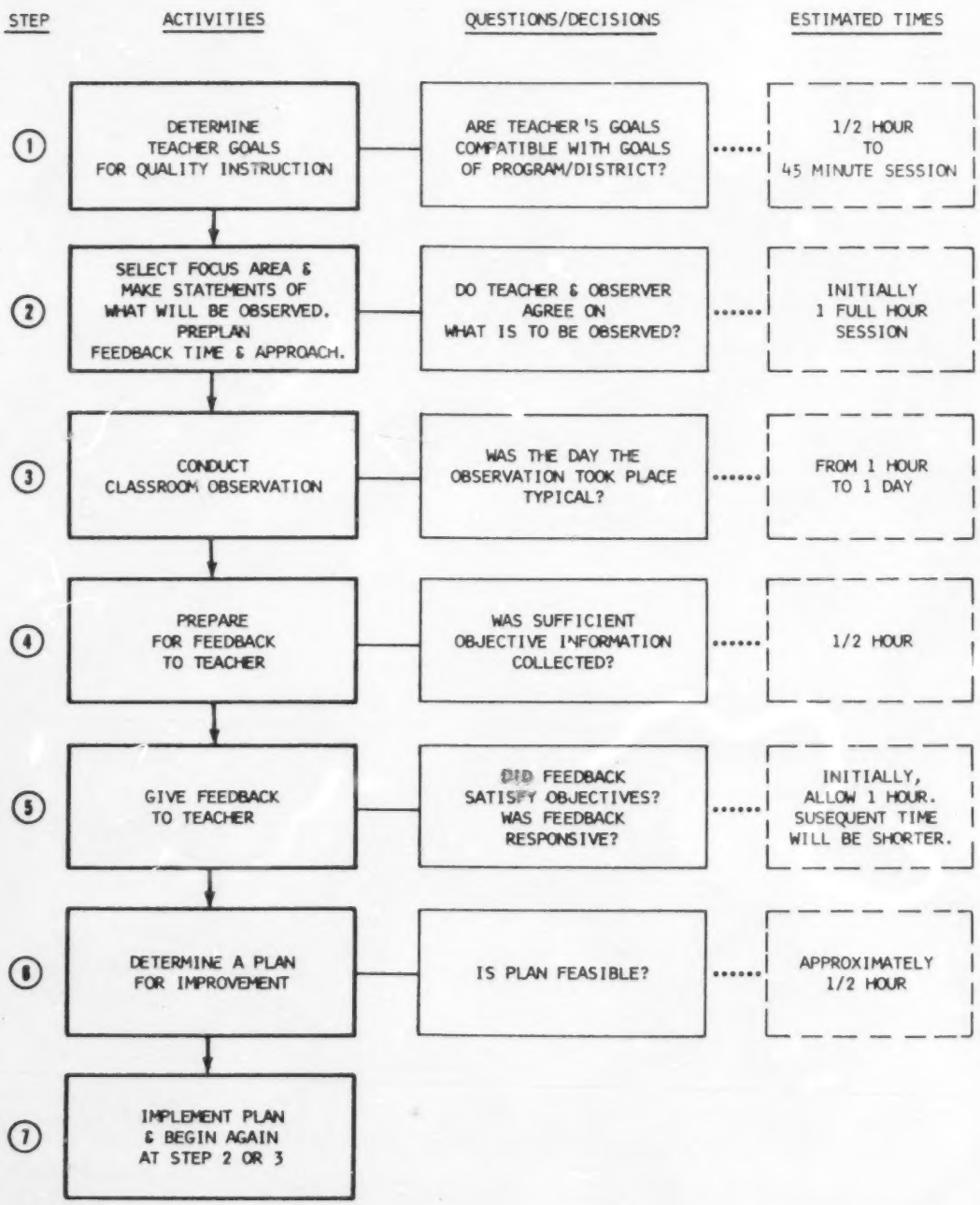
- NO ROLE MODELS. THE GOAL FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD CANNOT BE "NORMAL" GROWTH AS UNDERSTOOD BY THE SOCIETY. OFTEN SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN UNDERSTAND NORMAL PHYSICAL AND INTELLECTUAL FUNCTIONING AS THE GOAL.

- SPECIAL ATTENTION MAY LIMIT DEVELOPMENT. THE MASSIVE AMOUNTS OF ATTENTION RECEIVED BY THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILD MAY SINGLE THE CHILD OUT AND LEAD THE CHILD TO BELIEVE S/HE IS WEAK AND NEEDS TO BE REMEDIATED.

THE ATTENTION TO THIS VARIETY AND COMPLEXITY OF NEEDS AND THE TASK OF ACCOMODATING THESE NEEDS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS PRESENTS AN EXCITING CHALLENGE. THE FEEDBACK MODEL PROPOSED IN THIS MANUAL CAN PROVIDE THE CLASSROOM TEACHER WITH THE SUPPORT NEEDED TO MEET THIS CHALLENGE.

THIS MODEL HAS SEVEN STEPS. THE ACTIVITIES, ISSUES AND TIME ASSOCIATED WITH EACH STEP ARE SHOWN IN THE FOLLOWING CHART AND DESCRIBED SUBSEQUENTLY.

Feedback Model for Teacher Development


STEP
ACTIVITIES
QUESTIONS/DECISIONS
ESTIMATED TIMES
1
DETERMINE TEACHER GOALS FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION
ARE TEACHER'S GOALS COMPATIBLE WITH GOALS OF PROGRAM/DISTRICT?
1/2 HOUR TO 45 MINUTE SESSION
2
SELECT FOCUS AREA & MAKE STATEMENTS OF WHAT WILL BE OBSERVED. PREPLAN FEEDBACK TIME & APPROACH.
DO TEACHER & OBSERVER AGREE ON WHAT IS TO BE OBSERVED?
INITIALLY 1 FULL HOUR SESSION
3
CONDUCT CLASSROOM OBSERVATION
WAS THE DAY THE OBSERVATION TOOK PLACE TYPICAL?
FROM 1 HOUR TO 1 DAY
4
PREPARE FOR FEEDBACK TO TEACHER
WAS SUFFICIENT OBJECTIVE INFORMATION COLLECTED?
1/2 HOUR
5
GIVE FEEDBACK TO TEACHER
DID FEEDBACK SATISFY OBJECTIVES? WAS FEEDBACK RESPONSIVE?
INITIALLY, ALLOW 1 HOUR. SUSEQUENT TIME WILL BE SHORTER.
6
DETERMINE A PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT
IS PLAN FEASIBLE?
APPROXIMATELY 1/2 HOUR
7
IMPLEMENT PLAN & BEGIN AGAIN AT STEP 2 OR 3

B. ABOUT THE MODEL

THE VARIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THE CHART REFLECT AN ORDERED SEQUENCE. THE ORDER IS BASED ON LOGIC AND EXPERIENCE. WE ARE NOT PROPOSING A RIGID LOCK-STEP PROCESS. THE FEEDBACK SESSIONS SHOULD NATURALLY FLOW FROM ONE ACTIVITY TO THE NEXT, AND THE ATMOSPHERE SHOULD BE RELAXED. BUT TEACHERS ARE TIME BOUND AND MUST USE THEIR TIME EFFICIENTLY. CONSEQUENTLY, WHEN THEIR TIME IS REQUESTED, ACTIVITIES DESIGNED TO SUPPORT THEM MUST ALSO BE TIME BOUND AND EFFICIENT.

FOR EACH STEP IMPORTANT QUESTIONS MUST BE ASKED AND PROGRESS TO THE NEXT STEP IS DEPENDENT ON THE ANSWERS. THE PROCESS EITHER MOVES TO THE NEXT STEP OR ALTERNATIVE WAYS ARE EXPLORED TO COMPLETE THE STEP. EACH STEP AND DECISION POINT IS BRIEFLY DESCRIBED BELOW. AFTER THIS DESCRIPTION, THE PREPARATION AND CONDUCT OF THE FEEDBACK SESSION IS DETAILED, AND AN EXAMPLE IS PROVIDED.

STEP ONE: DETERMINING TEACHER GOALS FOR QUALITY INSTRUCTION

ONE INTENT OF THIS MODEL IS TO HELP THE TEACHER OBTAIN A MATCH BETWEEN THE TEACHER'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES, AND WHAT THE TEACHER ACTUALLY DOES IN THE CLASSROOM. TO DO THIS, BOTH THE TEACHER AND THE OBSERVER SHOULD BE AWARE OF WHAT THE TEACHER BELIEVES ABOUT EDUCATION. THIS STEP EXPLICITLY DEFINES THE TEACHER'S UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HOW LEARNING TAKES PLACE AND THE OBJECTIVES THAT ARE FELT IMPORTANT FOR ALL CHILDREN.

DECISION ONE: IS THERE COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN TEACHER GOALS AND DISTRICT OR PROJECT GOALS?

THE FIRST DECISION INVOLVES DETERMINING WHETHER THE TEACHER'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THOSE OF THE DISTRICT AND/OR PROJECT WITH WHICH THE TEACHER IS ASSOCIATED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE TEACHER MAY BE INVOLVED IN AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT THAT STRESSES "LEARNING THROUGH

DISCOVERY." IF THIS TEACHER WANTS HELP IN GETTING THE CHILDREN TO LEARN WHILE SITTING STILL, AND QUIET, THEN THERE WOULD BE CONFLICT WITH PROGRAM GOALS. OR, THE TEACHER MAY FEEL MORE COMPETENT TEACHING IN THE BRITISH INFANT MODEL OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT. IF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT MANDATES FREQUENT STANDARDIZED TESTING AND AN EXTRINSIC REWARD SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN (LIKE GIVING STARS FOR GOOD BEHAVIOR), THE TEACHER WOULD BE CONFUSED AND FRUSTRATED.

IF A CONFLICT EXISTS, THE OBSERVER AND TEACHER WILL NEED TO EXAMINE THE CRITICAL POINTS OF DIFFERENCE AND DECIDE WHAT THINGS CAN BE CHANGED AND WHAT THINGS THE TEACHER IS NOT WILLING TO CHANGE. THE OBSERVER CAN THEN FOCUS ON WHAT THE TEACHER WILL CHANGE--BEING AWARE OF THE AREA(S) OF RESISTANCE. THEN THE PARTNERSHIP MOVES TO STEP TWO.

STEP TWO: SELECTING AREA AND SETTING CRITERIA FOR OBSERVATION

SELECTING AN AREA FOR OBSERVATION INVOLVES ASKING THE QUESTION, "WHAT DO I WANT TO ACCOMPLISH DURING THE PERIOD OF OBSERVATION?" IT IS AT THIS POINT THAT THE TEACHER FOCUSES ON WHAT BEHAVIORS OR EVENTS S/HE WANTS OBSERVED. IN ADDITION, S/HE MUST DETERMINE THE MEASURE OF "SUCCESS" FOR THE SAMPLED PERFORMANCE. THE CRITERIA SHOULD BE STATED IN TERMS THAT CAN BE OBSERVED. FOR EXAMPLE, THE TEACHER MIGHT WANT TO FOCUS ON DEVELOPING INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOR AMONG STUDENTS. THE DESCRIPTIONS OF "INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOR" MUST BE VERY CONCRETE. THEY MIGHT DECIDE TO RECORD INSTANCES OF GIVING CHOICES TO CHILDREN, INSTANCES OF THE TEACHER ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS BY THEMSELVES, AND SO FORTH.

DECISION TWO: IS THERE MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON WHAT IS TO BE OBSERVED AND HOW THE OBSERVATION IS TO TAKE PLACE? AND WHEN FEEDBACK SHOULD TAKE PLACE?

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To effectively feed back information, both the teacher and the observer must be clear on what is being recorded during the observation and how it is being recorded. With this understanding one can be sure that both parties understand the issues under discussion. A partnership is enhanced at this stage when there is agreement on what constitutes a concrete example of an objective or when they can arrive at a reasonable way of recording the instances of the objective. When teacher and observer agree on the criteria, they move to the next step. Another important concern at this step is to assure that a time and place be identified for the feedback session. Sufficient time -- about one hour -- in a quiet location where neither person would be interrupted should be planned. Further, there should be no outside visitors to this session. This is the teacher's time and this privacy should be honored and maintained by the observer.

Step Three: Conducting the classroom observation

When the teacher and the observer are clear about what is to be observed and how it will be recorded, the teacher is ready to invite the observer to the classroom. Manuals II and III in this series are designed to specify what and how to observe a responsive classroom. Timing is quite important: it should be a time when agreed-upon behaviors are likely to occur. The observer should be as unobtrusive as possible, yet be close enough to the classroom activity that the important behaviors can be recorded. Ground rules for moving about the room, handling questions from children and so forth are best worked out prior to the observation session. Some observers prefer to make pre-observation visits to the classroom to allow the children to get used to their presence. This has the advantage of satisfying the natural curiosity about the "newcomer" and to permit a truer picture of child conduct to emerge.

DECISION THREE: WAS THE DAY THE OBSERVATION TOOK PLACE ATYPICAL?

OFTEN UNSCHEDULED EVENTS WILL OCCUR DURING THE CLASSROOM DAY THAT SIGNIFICANTLY DETRACT FROM TEACHER/CHILD INTERACTION. THESE EVENTS MAY BE EMERGENCY CALLS TO THE OFFICE, INJURIES TO CHILDREN REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION, VISITS FROM PARENTS OR UNANNOUNCED ADULTS, ETC. SUCH EVENTS CAN INTERRUPT A LEARNING EPISODE AND CAN CREATE UNDUE STRESS ON THE TEACHER, ESPECIALLY WHEN BEING OBSERVED. IF SUCH EVENTS DO OCCUR DURING THE OBSERVATION, THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER SHOULD DETERMINE IF THE EVENT CAUSED A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN THE TEACHER'S BEHAVIOR. IF SUCH A CHANGE DID RESULT, ANOTHER OBSERVATION SHOULD BE CONDUCTED.

STEP FOUR: PREPARING FOR THE FEEDBACK SESSION

THE OBSERVER WILL MOST LIKELY RECORD THE BEHAVIORS WITH SOME SHORTHAND METHOD OF CODING. CODING MAY BE DONE BY NOTING THE FREQUENCY OF A BEHAVIOR, BY USING A CHECKLIST OF BEHAVIORS OR BY KEEPING A RUNNING NARRATIVE. WHATEVER THE METHOD, THE OBSERVER WILL NEED TO TRANSLATE THE NOTES INTO A COHESIVE PRESENTATION OF THE INFORMATION. SINCE INSIGHTS AND SHORTHAND NOTES ARE QUICKLY FORGOTTEN OVER TIME, THEY SHOULD BE COMPREHENSIVELY WRITTEN DOWN AS SOON AFTER THE OBSERVATION PERIOD AS POSSIBLE. THE RICHNESS OF THE FEEDBACK SESSION IS DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE AMOUNT OF TIME SPENT IN ITS PREPARATION. THIS IS THE TIME FOR THE OBSERVER TO MAKE STATEMENTS ABOUT THE TEACHER'S BEHAVIOR, INTERSPERSED WITH EVENTS THAT OCCURRED BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE BEHAVIOR.

DECISION FOUR: WAS SUFFICIENT OBJECTIVE INFORMATION COLLECTED?

FREQUENTLY DURING AN OBSERVATION, THE OBSERVER HAS INSIGHT ON A BETTER WAY TO COLLECT AND RECORD INFORMATION OR ON

OTHER CATEGORIES OF OBSERVATION THAT CAN PROVIDE MORE MEANINGFUL INFORMATION. ALSO DURING THE OBSERVATION AN OBSERVER MAY BE DISTRACTED AND COME IN ON THE END OF A KEY TEACHER/CHILD EPISODE. SOMETIMES UPON REVIEWING THE INFORMATION RECORDED, THE OBSERVER QUESTIONS WHETHER THERE IS SUFFICIENT INFORMATION FOR A FEEDBACK SESSION. INSTEAD OF ATTEMPTING TO STRETCH THE INFORMATION INTO A FEEDBACK SESSION, THE OBSERVER MIGHT BETTER DECIDE TO HOLD ANOTHER OBSERVATION SESSION TO ATTAIN MORE COMPLETE INFORMATION. CONDUCTING REPEATED OBSERVATION SESSIONS BEFORE HOLDING A FEEDBACK SESSION ALSO OFFERS THE ADVANTAGE OF OBSERVING AT TWO OR MORE TIMES FOR PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR.

STEP FIVE: GIVING RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK TO THE TEACHER

A FEEDBACK SESSION IS USUALLY CHARACTERIZED BY ONE PERSON TELLING, THE OTHER LISTENING. "RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK," HOWEVER, IS DIFFERENT. IN A RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION, THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER INTERACT, EACH CONTRIBUTING SIGNIFICANTLY IN THE ANALYSIS OF WHAT WENT ON IN THE CLASSROOM. THE TEACHER ALSO GIVES INPUT AS AN OBSERVER/DOER AND IS A VALIDITY CHECK ON WHAT WAS OBSERVED. THE INFORMATION IS A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE OBSERVATION IN TERMS OF THE AGREED UPON CRITERIA FOR THE OBSERVATION. THE OBSERVER IS NOT THERE TO EVALUATE THE CONDUCT OF THE TEACHER, BUT TO PRESENT INFORMATION AND STIMULATE INQUIRY. THE FEEDBACK SESSION INVOLVES A SHARING OF PERCEPTIONS: THOSE OF THE OBSERVER WHO HAS OBJECTIVELY RECORDED BEHAVIOR AND THOSE OF THE TEACHER WHO CAN VALIDATE THE INFORMATION AND WHO IS INTIMATELY ACQUAINTED WITH BROADER CLASSROOM FEATURES.

DECISION FIVE: DID FEEDBACK SATISFY OBSERVATION OBJECTIVES?

AFTER THE RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION HAS TAKEN PLACE, THE PARTNERSHIP DISCUSSES WHETHER THERE IS A NEED TO TRY ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES IN ORDER TO IMPROVE. THE TEAM ASKS ITSELF: "DID THE BEHAVIORS RECORDED BY THE OBSERVER MATCH THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED EARLIER?" IF BOTH AGREE THAT THIS IS SO, THERE

ARE TWO ALTERNATIVES. ONE, THEY CAN PLAN TO OBSERVE IN ANOTHER AREA; OR TWO, THEY CAN DETERMINE A "HIGHER ORDER" OBSERVATION. A HIGHER ORDER OBSERVATION WOULD INVOLVE SELECTING ITEMS IN THE INITIAL OBSERVATION AREA THAT ARE MORE COMPLEX AND/OR SETTING MORE STRINGENT CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS. FOR EXAMPLE, INITIALLY TO REFLECT "CHILD INITIATION" THE OBSERVER MAY HAVE COUNTED THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CHILDREN ASK. A HIGHER ORDER OBSERVATION COULD BE THE CLASSIFICATION OF CHILD-ASKED QUESTIONS TO REFLECT QUESTIONS THAT ARE RELATED TO THE LESSON THE TEACHER GIVES AND ARE ASKED TO CLARIFY VS. QUESTIONS ASKED THAT EXTEND THE CONCEPTS THE TEACHER IS PRESENTING. IF THE TEACHER DOES NOT WISH TO CONTINUE, OF COURSE, THE PROCESS ENDS. IF THE INITIAL CRITERIA WERE NOT MET, THEN THE PARTNERSHIP MOVES TO THE NEXT STEP: PLANNING FOR IMPROVEMENT.

STEP SIX: DETERMINING A PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

DURING THIS STEP, THE TEACHER AND OBSERVER EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT. THE OBSERVER CAN SERVE AS AN IMPORTANT RESOURCE TO THE TEACHER. KNOWLEDGE OF EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES AND COORDINATION OF NECESSARY MATERIALS, DEMONSTRATIONS AND/OR SPECIALISTS CAN BE PROVIDED THE TEACHER. ALSO, THE POSSIBILITY FOR INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP WORKSHOPS CAN BE EXAMINED.

DECISION SIX: IS THE PLAN FEASIBLE?

WHEN IT IS JOINTLY DETERMINED THAT AN ALTERNATIVE TEACHING METHOD COULD BE BENEFICIAL AND A PLAN IS SET FOR THE TEACHER TO IMPLEMENT THIS DIFFERENT METHOD, THE OBSERVER INSURES THAT THE NECESSARY IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT IS PROVIDED THE TEACHER. THIS SUPPORT MAY BE IN THE FORM OF NEW MATERIALS, HAVING THE TEACHER OBSERVE IN OTHER CLASSROOMS, OR HAVING ANOTHER ADULT MODEL THE BEHAVIOR THAT IS TO BE IMPLEMENTED. THE TIME SCHEDULE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN MUST BE REALISTIC. PROMPT ATTENTION AND SUPPORT IS IMPORTANT TO MAINTAIN CONTINUITY OF EFFORT. MANY CHANCES TO ASSIST

TEACHERS IMPROVE THEIR TEACHING HAVE BEEN LOST BECAUSE OF POOR TIMING AND BECAUSE SOMEONE FORGOT TO FOLLOW UP.

STEP SEVEN: IMPLEMENTING A PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT

WHEN THE PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT IS PUT INTO FINAL FORM, THE TEACHER PROCEEDS TO TRY IT. WHEN S/HE IS COMFORTABLE WITH THE NEW STRATEGY, THE OBSERVER IS INVITED TO RETURN TO THE CLASSROOM. STEPS THREE THROUGH FIVE ARE REPEATED.

ONE GOAL OF THIS MODEL FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS TO HAVE THE TEACHERS THEMSELVES CONDUCT THE OBSERVATION - EVALUATION - CHANGE PROCESS. THE USE OF PORTABLE VIDEO RECORDERS OR TRAINING TEACHING ASSISTANTS TO OBSERVE ARE WAYS TO ENCOURAGE THE SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS. CERTAINLY THE OBSERVER/STAFF DEVELOPER WILL NOT WANT TO LOSE TOUCH WITH THE TEACHER, AND WILL WANT TO INSURE THAT THE TEACHER IS FOCUSING ON IMPORTANT EDUCATIONAL BEHAVIOR. YET, THE VALUE AND IMPACT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT WILL BE MAXIMIZED TO THE EXTENT EACH PERSON WITHIN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS CONDUCTS SYSTEMATIC, RESPONSIBLE SELF-EVALUATION.

IN THE NEXT SECTION OF THIS MANUAL, STEPS 4 - 6 ARE SINGLED OUT AND DETAILED SINCE THEY ARE CRITICAL ACTIVITIES IN THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL.

THIS PAGE IS INCLUDED FOR YOUR DOODLES AND FOR SPACING.

C. MORE NOTES ON STEP FOUR: PREPARING FOR THE RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION

In preparing for the responsive feedback session, the observer must rely on knowledge gained about the teacher, about the children in the class, about the conditions of learning in the classroom, and the school situation or climate. This knowledge is used to understand what the observation information mean and to use the observation information to explain child behavior. The major task for the observer in the responsive feedback session is to examine the relationship between what the teacher does or what the conditions of the classroom were and how the children react. The observer imparts this information in a responsive way to the teacher. For example, suppose that independent learning was the focus of the observation. The observer has recorded instances of independent behavior (behavior of the children) and instances of teacher encouragement of independent behavior (conditions of the teacher). From this information, the observer tries to define a causal relationship between the two: "If the teacher does this, the children will do that." The observer tries to organize the information and present it such that the teacher is guided to answer the question, "Were the techniques or methods I used appropriate for guiding independent behavior among the students?" Sometimes the teacher's techniques and methods may be appropriate but external forces intervene to dampen their effectiveness. The school district's testing program, drastic change in the weather, the expectation felt just prior to holidays, a school yard fight and outbreaks of communicable diseases are examples of external forces that could influence children's receptivity to learning. These external operating factors must be taken into account in the responsive feedback session.

Organizing information for the responsive feedback session is the first step in preparation. The second involves attending to the form in which the information will be presented. This is crucial to the success of any feedback session. Most of us believe we see the world and day-to-day events through different lenses

THAT HAVE BEEN FORMED BY DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES. TO AVOID CONFLICT AND MISUNDERSTANDING, THEREFORE, EFFORTS ARE MADE TO COMMUNICATE AS OBJECTIVELY AS POSSIBLE. SOME GUIDELINES FOR STRUCTURING INFORMATION FOLLOW.

1. FOCUS ON BEHAVIORS THE TEACHER CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT. FRUSTRATION IS ONLY INCREASED IF THE TEACHER IS REMINDED OF SHORTCOMINGS OR SITUATIONS BEYOND HIS/HER CONTROL. THE PURPOSE OF THE OBSERVATION PROCESS IS TO INCREASE SKILLS. WHILE IT IS IMPORTANT TO ACKNOWLEDGE EXTERNAL FORCES THAT TEND TO BE UNCHANGEABLE, ONLY BEHAVIORS THAT ARE POTENTIALLY UNDER THE TEACHER'S CONTROL SHOULD BE ADDRESSED.

2. FOCUS ON BEHAVIORS ON WHICH THE TEACHER CAN BUILD AND FOR WHICH S/HE CAN TAKE CREDIT. IT IS MORE EFFECTIVE TO THINK IN TERMS OF INCREASING SPECIFIC BEHAVIORS OR ELABORATING THEM THAN IN TERMS OF ELIMINATING THEM.

3. BE SPECIFIC RATHER THAN GENERAL. CHANGES ARE ONLY POSSIBLE WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THE LINKS BETWEEN A PARTICULAR BEHAVIOR AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. IT IS MORE HELPFUL TO HEAR, "YOU TALKED 70% OF THE TIME WHILE YOUR STUDENTS TALKED 30% OF THE TIME," THAN TO HEAR, "YOU ARE DOMINATING."

D. MORE NOTES ON STEP FIVE: THE FEEDBACK SESSION - COMMUNICATING INFORMATION TO TEACHERS

THE RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION IS A CRITICAL LINK IN THE DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL. IT DEVELOPS A TRUSTING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER, PROVIDES THE TEACHER WITH A CLEAR IDEA OF THE SITUATION AND FROM THIS KNOWLEDGE PLANS FOR DEVELOPMENT ARE BUILT. BEHAVIOR CHANGE TOWARD INCREASED COMPETENCE STEMS FROM THIS SESSION.

THE PROCESS OF COMMUNICATING OBSERVATIONS ABOUT SOMEONE'S BEHAVIOR TO THAT PERSON IS CALLED GIVING FEEDBACK. WHEN THIS FEEDBACK PROCESS IS PART OF A LARGER STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM THAT VALUES THE TEACHER AS A LEARNER AND INDIVIDUAL, THIS PROCESS IS RESPONSIVE. DURING RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSIONS THE OBSERVER SHARES A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT WAS SEEN WITH THE TEACHER. THE DISCUSSION SHOULD FOCUS ONLY ON THE AREAS AGREED UPON IN THE CRITERIA SETTING CONFERENCE. WHILE IT IS DESIRABLE TO TRY TO STICK TO THE TOPIC, IT MAY BE NECESSARY AT TIMES TO ADDRESS OTHER EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND CONCERNS OF THE TEACHER. A SHIFT TO ANOTHER TOPIC MAY HELP ESTABLISH OR MAINTAIN RAPPORT IF THE TEACHER SEEMS UNCOMFORTABLE. THIS SHIFT MAY ALSO CLARIFY HOW RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSIONS FIT INTO A LARGER SYSTEM OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT. A DEPARTURE FROM MAIN TOPICS MAY ALSO BE DESIRABLE IF THE PARTNERSHIP DISCOVERS UNANTICIPATED BUT FRUITFUL AVENUES TO EXAMINE. PROCEDURES SHOULD NOT BE SO RIGID THAT CREATIVITY OR SPONTANEITY IS MADE IMPOSSIBLE.

DURING THE RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION, THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER EXAMINE INFORMATION ON WHAT WAS OBSERVED, IDENTIFY AREAS OF CONCERN, EXPLORE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN BEHAVIORS AND EVENTS AND DECIDE ON THE NEED FOR FURTHER STEPS. THESE ACTIVITIES REQUIRE A QUIET, UNHURRIED ENVIRONMENT. WE SUGGEST, THEREFORE, THAT THE FEEDBACK SESSION TAKE PLACE AT A PLANNED TIME IN A PROFESSIONAL, PRIVATE SETTING. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT SUFFICIENT TIME BE ALLOWED FOR A THOROUGH DISCUSSION. BY ADHERING TO THESE GUIDELINES, BOTH PARTICIPANTS ARE RECOGNIZING THAT THE EFFORT IS IMPORTANT AND SERIOUS.

MANY FIND IT DIFFICULT TO GIVE AND RECEIVE FEEDBACK BECAUSE OF INEXPERIENCE, RELUCTANCE, AND FEARS ASSOCIATED WITH DISCUSSING THINGS WE WOULD RATHER NOT TELL OR HEAR. A RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION IS MARKED BY SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN BOTH DIRECTIONS. THIS REQUIRES TRUST AND CONFIDENCE BETWEEN THE OBSERVER AND TEACHER. RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE FOLLOWING CONCERNS:

THE NEEDS OF THE RECEIVER. INFORMATION FROM THE OBSERVATION SHOULD HELP, NOT HURT. THE OBSERVER MUST CAREFULLY AVOID MAKING STATEMENTS THAT ARE SELF-SERVING OR THAT GIVE THE OBSERVER A PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE. STATEMENTS THAT BEGIN, "WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO IS..." OR "IF ONLY YOU HAD..." ARE TO AVOIDED FOR THESE REASONS. SUGGESTIONS BY AN OBSERVER MAY BE PHRASED, "ONE WAY TEACHERS HAVE HANDLED THIS PROBLEM IS TO ..." WHEN A TEACHER HAS IDENTIFIED A PROBLEM, THE OBSERVER CAN ELICIT ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES BY SAYING, "HOW MIGHT YOU HAVE HANDLED IT DIFFERENTLY?"

TIMING. THE FEEDBACK SESSION SHOULD OCCUR AS SOON AFTER THE OBSERVATION PERIOD AS POSSIBLE. DELAYS OF MORE THAN A DAY OR TWO ARE BEST AVOIDED AS THE EVENTS WILL DIM IN THE MEMORIES OF BOTH THE OBSERVER AND THE TEACHER. SINCE FEEDBACK CAN INVOLVE EMOTIONS, HOWEVER, SESSIONS SHOULD BE SCHEDULED WHEN THE PARTICIPANTS ARE FEELING CONFIDENT AND STRONG.

AMOUNT OF FEEDBACK. THE OBSERVER IS AWARE OF AND SENSITIVE TO SIGNS OF "OVERLOAD" FROM THE TEACHER. IF TOO MUCH INFORMATION IS COMMUNICATED, THEN IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FOCUS ON SPECIFIC PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION AND ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES. MANY TIMES THE TEACHER IS PRESENTED WITH A LIST OF AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENT IS WARRANTED. THERE MAY BE SIX ITEMS ON THE LIST. NO EFFORT IS MADE TO INDICATE WHICH ON THE LIST ARE MOST IMPORTANT FROM THE TEACHER'S POINT OF VIEW, OR WHICH TAKES MORE TIME TO SATISFY. THE OBSERVER MUST USE CONSIDERABLE JUDGMENT NOT TO OVERLOAD THE TEACHER WITH MORE THAN THE TEACHER CAN REALISTICALLY HANDLE. A GOOD WAY TO INSURE

OVERLOAD DOES NOT OCCUR IS TO HAVE THE OBSERVER SET THE PACE BY INTERJECTING QUESTIONS INTO THE FEEDBACK SESSION SUCH AS: "HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT GOING TO ANOTHER AREA?" "IS THAT ENOUGH FOR NOW?" "SHOULD WE STOP HERE?"

DESCRIPTION VS. EVALUATION. THE OBSERVER CAREFULLY FOCUSES ON WHAT IS SAID OR DONE, NOT WHY, AND AVOIDS ATTRIBUTING MOTIVATIONS AND INTENTIONS TO BEHAVIORS OF THE TEACHER. IT IS PRESUMPTUOUS TO ATTRIBUTE WHY A TEACHER DOES THINGS AND MAY SERVE TO ALIENATE THE RECEIVER. ANY UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THE INTENT OR WHAT THE TEACHER REALLY MEANS MAY BE EXPLORED IN THE NEXT SESSION HOWEVER. THE OBSERVER ALSO AVOIDS MAKING JUDGMENTS ABOUT TEACHER BEHAVIORS. INSTEAD OF SAYING, "YOU BELITTLED JOHNNY WHEN YOU SAID..." TRY, "HOW DID JOHNNY RESPOND WHEN YOU SAID..."

CHECKING. TO INSURE CLEAR COMMUNICATION, THE OBSERVER ENCOURAGES THE TEACHER TO REPHRASE THE FEEDBACK TO SEE IF HIS PERCEPTIONS CORRESPOND TO WHAT THE SENDER HAD IN MIND. THIS HELPS TO AVOID DISTORTION AND MISINTERPRETATION.

E. MORE NOTES ON STEP SIX: DESIGNING A PLAN FOR DEVELOPMENT*

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL IN TEACHING CAN RESULT FROM TRIAL AND METHODS, BUT THEY ARE MOST EFFICIENTLY AND EFFECTIVELY GAINED THROUGH PLANNED INQUIRY (FLANDERS). PLANNED INQUIRY REFERS TO AN APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING. IT REQUIRES IDENTIFYING A PROBLEM (THROUGH EXAMINATION OF OBSERVATION DATA), SPECIFYING THE DESIRED STATE OF AFFAIRS, DETERMINING ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF STRUCTURING THE ENVIRONMENT, TESTING OR TRYING OUT THE MOST LIKELY ALTERNATIVE, COMPARING THE RESULTS WITH THE RESULTS OF THE INITIAL OBSERVATION, AND DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT THE ALTERNATIVE IS BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL.

THE QUALITY OF A PLAN IS INFLUENCED BY THE NATURE OF THE COMPARISONS THAT ARE BUILT INTO THE EFFORT. THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST OBSERVATION SESSION PROVIDE THE TEACHER WITH BASELINE INFORMATION, I.E. INFORMATION AGAINST WHICH FUTURE OBSERVATION RESULTS CAN BE COMPARED. A TEACHER, FOR EXAMPLE, MAY BE INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING THE SKILL OF INCORPORATING STUDENT IDEAS DURING GROUP DISCUSSIONS. DURING THE INITIAL OBSERVATION, THE OBSERVER RECORDS THE RATE OF "USE OF STUDENT IDEAS." THIS FIGURE IS THE BASELINE NUMBER OF THE BEHAVIOR. WHEN THE TEACHER HAS DETERMINED A STRATEGY DESIGNED TO IMPROVE THE FREQUENCY OF HIS/HER "USE OF STUDENT IDEAS," THE SUBSEQUENT OBSERVATION DATA WILL CONFIRM OR DISCREDIT THE STRATEGY AS EFFECTIVE. IF THE RATE DURING THE SECOND OBSERVATION EXCEEDS THAT OF THE FIRST, THE STRATEGY IS SUCCESSFUL.

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*THIS SECTION OFFERS A FEW IDEAS ON A PLAN FOR TEACHING IMPROVEMENT. TEACHER IMPROVEMENT IS MORE EFFECTIVELY SUPPORTED BY A COMPREHENSIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM. SUCH A PROGRAM IS PRESENTED IN THE FILM, "LEARNING BEGINS WITH QUESTIONS" AND DISCUSSED IN DEPTH IN: "THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS TRAINING MANUAL, "THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAM: STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM," AND OTHER STAFF DEVELOPMENT MATERIALS AVAILABLE FROM THE FAR WEST LABORATORY FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT, 1855 FOLSOM ST., SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103.

ONCE THE TEACHER HAS IDENTIFIED THE PROBLEM AREA AND SPECIFIED THE DESIRED "STATE OF AFFAIRS," THE NEXT STEP INVOLVES DETERMINING WHAT STRATEGY IS MOST LIKELY TO ELICIT AND SUPPORT THE DESIRED PATTERN OR BEHAVIOR. THE PAIRING OF DESIRED OUTCOMES WITH APPROPRIATE TEACHING STRATEGIES IS THE HEART OF THE EFFORT TO DEVELOP TEACHING SKILLS.

THE PARTNERSHIP OF THE TEACHER AND OBSERVER CAN BE ESPECIALLY BENEFICIAL DURING THIS STAGE. THERE IS MUCH TO BE GAINED FROM HAVING ACCESS TO SOMEONE WHO HAS HAD EXPERIENCE THAT MAY ADD TO A TEACHER'S REPERTOIRE. ALTERNATIVELY, THE PARTNERS MAY ENCOUNTER A SITUATION WHICH NEITHER ONE HAS PREVIOUSLY CONFRONTED. BY DRAWING ON THE EXPERIENCE AND INTUITION OF BOTH PROFESSIONALS, SOLUTIONS CAN BE MORE READILY DISCOVERED THAN IF THE TEACHER WERE LEFT TO CONFRONT IT ALONE.

THERE ARE OTHER RESOURCES FOR IDENTIFYING DIFFERENT TEACHING STRATEGIES.

OBSERVING OTHER CLASSROOM TEACHERS. SOME TEACHERS ARE KNOWN AS BEING PARTICULARLY STRONG IN CERTAIN AREAS. ONE TEACHER MAY BE KNOWN FOR HIS/HER ABILITY TO USE CHILD-DEVELOPED MATERIALS FOR LEARNING CONCEPTS; ANOTHER MIGHT BE KNOWN FOR THE EFFECTIVE WAY S/HE AND THE PARAPROFESSIONAL WORK AS A TEAM; ANOTHER MAY BE KNOWN FOR THE EFFICIENT WAY S/HE INCORPORATES PARENT VOLUNTEERS INTO THE CLASSROOM. THESE RESOURCES ARE OFTEN READILY AVAILABLE AS ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES.

USING A RESOURCE TEACHER IN THE SCHOOL. MOST SCHOOLS EMPLOY STAFF ESPECIALLY TRAINED TO ACT AS RESOURCE TEACHERS. FREQUENTLY, THE SPECIAL TRAINING RECEIVED BY THESE TEACHERS IS IN ALTERNATIVE TEACHING METHODS. RESOURCE TEACHERS ARE ALSO TRAINED TO MODEL BEHAVIOR IN THE CLASSROOM ALLOWING A TEACHER TO SEE HOW A DIFFERENT TEACHING STRATEGY ACTUALLY WORKS IN THE CLASSROOM.

USING OUTSIDE RESOURCES. MANY SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE PART OF STATE OR FEDERAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO IMPROVE

EDUCATION. FREQUENTLY, THIS INVOLVEMENT RESULTS IN VISITS FROM EDUCATIONAL PERSONNEL WHO HAVE WORKED EXTENSIVELY IN THE AREA OF TEACHER IMPROVEMENT. THE INFORMATION THESE PEOPLE BRING TO A SCHOOL DISTRICT, THE EXPERIENCES THEY HAVE HAD IN IDENTIFYING AND APPLYING ALTERNATIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES AND IN OBSERVING TEACHERS, AND THE RESULTS OF TEACHER IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS CAN OFFER CONSIDERABLE INSIGHT TO THE PLAN FOR IMPROVEMENT.

AFTER AN ALTERNATIVE TEACHING STRATEGY IS IDENTIFIED, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THE OBSERVER, NOW BECOMING MORE OF A FACILITATOR, SUPPORTS THE TEACHER TO TRY THE STRATEGY. THE NEW STRATEGY MAY REQUIRE MATERIALS WHICH THE OBSERVER SHOULD SECURE, OR THE TEACHER MAY WANT TO TRY THE NEW TEACHING TECHNIQUE ON A SMALL GROUP OF THE CLASS AND NEED SOME ASSISTANCE IN SUPERVISING THE REMAINING CHILDREN. THE OBSERVER (TURNED FACILITATOR) SHOULD DO WHAT IS POSSIBLE TO ALLOW THE TEACHER UNINTERRUPTED TIME TO TRY THE NEW STRATEGY.

THE TEACHER MAY WANT TO TRY THE PARTICULAR STRATEGY ON OTHER CHILDREN BEFORE APPLYING IT TO THE CLASS. THE AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCE TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS IN THE SCHOOL CAN ALLOW FOR THIS.

AT THIS PHASE, THE RESPONSIVE FEEDBACK SESSION, THE OBSERVER HAS MOVED CLOSER TOWARD BEING A STAFF DEVELOPER. NOW THE MOST IMPORTANT JOB OF THE OBSERVER TURNED STAFF DEVELOPER IS TO WORK WITH THE TEACHER TO DRAW UP A REALISTIC PLAN, A PLAN THAT IS POSSIBLE IN THE TIME SET FOR IT. TO INSURE THE PLAN IS KEPT, THE OBSERVER/STAFF DEVELOPER MUST BE COMMITTED TO THE PLAN AND MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH THE TEACHER.

F. IMPLEMENT PLAN, THE ISSUE OF CONTINUITY

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF INSTRUCTION IS A DYNAMIC PROCESS. WITH MORE RESEARCH FOCUSED ON THE PROCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN, HOW CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS LEARN BEST, AND HOW DIFFERENT ADULTS TEACH BEST, NEWER AND MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHING/ LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS WILL BE DEVELOPED.

THE MODEL FOR GIVING FEEDBACK TO TEACHERS PRESENTED IN THIS PAPER ADHERES TO THIS NOTION. HOWEVER, AS THE TEACHER AND OBSERVER CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON NEW AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT, AND REVIEW VARIOUS WAYS TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION, AN ISSUE OF CONTINUITY ARISES. DIFFERENT TEACHING STRATEGIES REFLECT DIFFERENT POSITIONS ON HOW LEARNERS LEARN BEST. SOME OF THESE POSITIONS ARE REFLECTED BY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND ARE BASED ON LEARNING THEORIES BY SKINNER, PIAGET, OR MONTESSORI. TO SELECT TEACHING STRATEGIES IN SMORGASBORD FASHION FROM EDUCATIONAL MODELS BASED ON A DIFFERENT THEORETICAL BASE MAY BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE CHILD. FOR EXAMPLE, IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY CONFUSING FOR A CHILD TO BE REINFORCED CONTINUOUSLY WHILE LEARNING MATHEMATICS BY RECEIVING TOKENS, THEN TO BE TAUGHT READING IN A LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE MODEL, EXPECTING THE CHILD TO BE MOTIVATED INTRINSICALLY. LIKEWISE, IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO GRADUATE A GROUP OF CHILDREN WHO HAVE LEARNED TO LEARN IN AN OPEN-CLASSROOM MODEL, REFLECTIVE OF A BRITISH INFANT SCHOOL, TO A CLASSROOM REFLECTING A STRONG BEHAVIORISTIC PERSPECTIVE.

RESEARCH TO DATE ON THESE ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL MODELS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATES THAT CHILDREN DO DEVELOP DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL MODELS (CLINE, J., 1975). WHAT HAS NOT BEEN RESEARCHED IS THE RESULT OF MOVING CHILDREN FROM ONE MODEL TO ANOTHER.

BECAUSE OF THIS AND A NUMBER OF OTHER IMPORTANT ISSUES NOT THE TOPIC OF THIS PAPER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WITHIN A PARTICULAR EDUCATIONAL MODEL. THE MODEL CHOSEN SHOULD REFLECT THE VALUES OF THE CHILD'S PARENTS AND COMMUNITY. WHEN THERE IS SUCH A MODEL, AND IT IS BASED ON A CLEAR

SET OF EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, THE CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS BECOMES EVEN CLEARER. FURTHER, THE LEARNER IN THE SYSTEM EXPERIENCES CONTINUITY IN TEACHING STYLE AND THE TEACHERS RECEIVE CLEAR KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM.

THE NEXT SECTION DESCRIBES HOW THIS FEEDBACK MODEL WAS APPLIED TO A TEACHING ASSISTANT IN A PRESCHOOL CLASSROOM. THE TEACHING ASSISTANT WAS IN A STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM OF THE RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS PROJECT. THIS PROJECT PROVIDES STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO TEACHERS IN CLASSROOMS INTEGRATING SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS.

G. APPLICATION OF FEEDBACK PRINCIPLES

THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXAMPLE OF SPECIFIC OBSERVATION AND FEEDBACK CONDUCTED FOR A PRESCHOOL PARAPROFESSIONAL TEACHING ASSISTANT. THE TA WAS PARTICIPATING IN AN EXPERIMENTAL CLASSROOM IN THE SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS PROJECT AT THE FAR WEST LABORATORY. AS PART OF THE PROJECT, ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES WERE TRAINED TO WORK AS TEACHING ASSISTANTS IN THE CLASSROOM. THE PARTICULAR TA WHOSE OBSERVATION IS INCLUDED HERE IS CLASSIFIED AS EDUCABLY DEAF. HER HEARING HAS BEEN PARTIALLY RESTORED BILATERALLY WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF HEARING AIDES.

CHILDREN CAME TO THIS CLASSROOM WITH A WIDE RANGE OF SPECIAL NEEDS. ONE WAS AN EXCEPTIONALLY SMALL CHILD; ANOTHER WAS DEAF WITH CONSEQUENT SPEECH AND BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS; ONE WAS THOUGHT TO BE LEARNING DISABLED; AND OTHERS WERE LANGUAGE DELAYED WITH ARTICULATION PROBLEMS.

DETERMINING GOALS

THE TEACHERS AND TA'S WERE PREPARED IN STAFF DEVELOPMENT TO OPERATE A RESPONSIVE PROGRAM FOR THE INTEGRATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN INTO THE CLASSROOM. A STAFF DEVELOPER STRESSED BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH WEEKLY INSERVICE TRAINING. THIS INSERVICE DEFINED AND DISCUSSED RESPONSIVE CONCEPTS AND PROVIDED TA'S WITH EXPERIENCES AND MATERIALS TO TRY OUT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS.* DURING THIS INSERVICE, A CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SCHEDULE AND GUIDE WERE INTRODUCED TO THE STAFF TO PROVIDE DEFINITIONS OF SPECIFIC RESPONSIVE PRACTICES. BECAUSE OF THIS TRAINING AND ITS EMPHASIS ON RESPONSIVENESS, THE TA WAS COMFORTABLE TO REQUEST AN OBSERVATION OF HER TEACHING.

* SEE "ME, MY SCHOOL AND MY NEIGHBORHOOD -- ACTIVITIES ON DIFFERENCES FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS," RESPONSIVE EDUCATION FOR SPECIAL NEEDS KIDS PROJECT, FAR WEST EDUCATIONAL LABORATORY, SAN FRANCISCO, 1979.

Selecting Focus and Setting Criteria

The staff developer, a classroom teacher, and the TA discussed the area in which the TA needed assistance, and the particular focus of the feedback. We talked about the way children are managed in the Responsive Model that would be demonstrated. We discussed the extent to which the TA was in agreement with this responsive approach. We also discussed the conduct of the observation procedures. We agreed that this initial observation should be short and would cover a lesson the TA was well prepared to teach. Having made agreements, we set a more specific focus for the observation.

Focus: The focus of the observation was to be classroom management through the use of appropriate language. Special attention would be given to transition periods: when the children are changing from one activity to another.

Criteria: We set a simple set of criteria that would occur/could be observed if management during the transition was smooth and successful. The non-desired criteria were also identified.

Situations that could possibly affect the observation were identified and then a specific time was set for the feedback. The participants agreed to a process of feedback. Before the observation, the TA was presented with a sheet that summarized the pre-observation discussion (see page 27)

OBSERVATION OF TEACHING ASSISTANT

APRIL 18, 1979

PRE-OBSERVATION DISCUSSION:

DISCUSSION AND AGREEMENT ON THE PRINCIPLES OF RESPONSIVE EDUCATION, THE OBSERVATION PROCEDURES, AND THE FOCUS OF THE OBSERVATION.

FOCUS:

THE FOCUS IS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT (ESPECIALLY TRANSITION) THROUGH THE APPROPRIATE USE OF LANGUAGE.

SPECIFIC ACTIVITY OBSERVED:

A TRANSITION FROM USING PEABODY MATERIALS TO ANOTHER ACTIVITY SUCH AS USING RECORDS.

CRITERIA (IDENTIFIED BY OBSERVER/TEACHER):

IN A GOOD TRANSITION THE FOLLOWING SHOULD CCOUR/CAN BE OBSERVED:

A.	KIDS RESPONDED SMOOTHLY	YES	NO
B.	KIDS GIVEN EXPECTATION OF WHAT IS TO COME	YES	NO
C.	PRAISE GIVEN TO DESIRED BEHAVIOR	YES	NO
D.	IDENTIFY FAMILIAR ACTIVITY FOR KIDS TO DO WHILE PREPARING NEW MATERIALS	YES	NO

NON-DESIRED CRITERIA:

* NO EXPECTATION GIVEN
* DIRECTIONS NOT CLEAR
* UNDESIRED BEHAVIOR POINTED OUT
* TEACHER LOSES CONTROL
* NO LESSON PLAN

SITUATIONS THAT MAY INFLUENCE OBSERVATION:

1. KIDS MAY NOT BE READY FOR LESSON
2. OTHER ACTIVITIES MAY INFLUENCE TRANSITION

FEEDBACK:

WHEN: SAME DAY - 12:15 P.M. (CAN LAST 45 MIN.)

HOW: ORAL, INTERACTIVELY

Observation and Feedback

The TA was comfortable with the criteria she had helped choose and with the ground rules for the observation and feedback. The observer spent the entire morning in the classroom interacting with the children. During the end of the morning, the scheduled observation took place. After the morning class ended, the teacher, TA, and observer sat down together and discussed what had occurred during the session.

The feedback began with a discussion about the TA's feelings during the observation and how she would evaluate it. She was guided to answer the specific criteria questions on the observation worksheet and on a section (8A) of a project observation schedule (see page 29). On almost all items the observer and teacher agreed. Discussions resolved the disagreements when they were identified.

The discussion focused on what the TA did well. For the items scored "NC," the TA was provided with specific examples of what did occur and what could have happened had she interacted differently with the children. For example, the TA was informed that she had allowed too much time to elapse between announcement of the activity change and the actual movement. As a wrap up, the TA was aked to observe the teacher using the same observation questions and the same sequence of activity. It was felt that this modeling process would benefit the TA considerably.

It was suggested that subsequent development for the TA might include another observation in a similar situation with a video recording. The TA could view herself and engage in a guided self-evaluation. Often when paraprofessionals -- or even trained teachers -- critique themselves they are unduly harsh. In this case, the role of the observer is to soften the teacher's self-criticism and direct the discussion to what did happen and what the teacher could do differently.

Again, the focus and goal of these interactions are to have the teacher engage in development through a realistic and sensitive self-critique.

* See Booklet III in this series, Observation Schedule, Section 8A, Classroom Management: Activities Shift.

SECTION 8A CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: ACTIVITIES SHIFT

DIRECTIONS: OBSERVE A TEACHER FOR TEN MINUTES AT THE BEGINNING OF A MAJOR SHIFT IN ACTIVITIES. PROVIDE THE INFORMATION ASKED AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS BY CIRCLING A YES OR NO.

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES OF THE ACTIVITY SHIFT

_____

_____

_____

OTHER INFORMATION

TIME OBSERVATION BEGAN: ___HR. _____MIN.

ENDED ___HR. _____MIN.

8A.1	WERE CHILDREN INFORMED BEFORE THE TRANSITION OF ACTIVITIES?	YES	NO	8A.1
8A.2	WERE DIRECTIONS, ASSIGNMENT, TASK, OR FOCUS PROVIDED THE CHILDREN?	YES	NO	8A.2
8A.3	DID THE CHILDREN FOLLOW THE TEACHER'S DIRECTIONS?	YES	NO	8A.3
8A.4	WHEN NEEDED BY A CHILD, DID THE TEACHER GIVE DIRECTIONS IN SMALL STEPS?	YES	NO	8A.4
8A.5	DID CHILDREN MOVE ABOUT THE CLASSROOM PURPOSEFULLY?	YES	NO	8A.5
8A.6	DID THE TEACHER ACKNOWLEDGE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR AND/OR ACHIEVEMENT?	YES	NO	8A.6
8A.7	WHEN NEEDED BY A CHILD, DID THE TEACHER GIVE PERSONAL ATTENTION AND SUPPORT DURING THE TRANSITION?	YES	NO	8A.7
8A.8	DID THE TEACHER PROVIDE POSITIVE REDIRECTION TO A CHILD WHEN NECESSARY?	YES	NO	8A.8
8A.9	DID CHILDREN WORK COOPERATIVELY WITH EACH OTHER?	YES	NO	8A.9
8A.10	THERE WAS NO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR BY THE CHILDREN?	YES	NO	8A.10
8A.11	DID THE TEACHER CORRECT A DISRUPTIVE CHILD WHEN AWARE OF IT?	YES	NO	8A.11
8A.12	DID THE TEACHER DEAL PRIVATELY WITH CHILDREN WHO WERE DISRUPTIVE OR WHO NEEDED SPECIAL CORRECTIVE HELP?	YES	NO	8A.12
8A.13	DID THE TEACHER USE FORCE WHEN APPROPRIATE?	YES	NO	8A.13

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